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ABSTRACT

A fourth-grade teacher designed and implemented a practicum study for the purpose of increasing parent participation in a culturally diverse, rural, upper elementary school. The central aim was to involve parents in the education of their children. To attain the objective, unique communication strategies were used to meet the needs of the culturally diverse population. In addition, flexible hours for parent meetings in the home and at school were established, and monthly parent education evening workshops based on parent needs were conducted. Classroom video productions were used in an effort to encourage parent attendance. Children were involved in the parent participation process. Outcomes were positive. All 31 parents attended the parent/teacher conference. An average of 24 out of 31 parents attended the evening workshops. A total of 20 parents used home learning activities. Related materials are appended.
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Increasing Parent Participation In The Upper Elementary School Through Parent Education

by

Dale L. Hudson

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NOVA UNIVERSITY

Increasing Parent Participation In The Upper Elementary School Through Parent Education

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Dale L. Hudson

Cluster #33

PS 018728

A Practicum I Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1990

PRACTICUM APPROVAL PAGE

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Dale L. Hudson under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

April 19, 1990 — Georgianna Lowen
Date of Final Approval of Report — Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D., Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Increasing Parent Participation In The Upper Elementary School Through Parent Education. Hudson, Dale L., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Parent Involvement in Schools/Parent Support/Parent-Teacher Communication/Parent Participation/Home-School Relations/Parent Education

This practicum was designed to increase parent participation in a culturally diverse, rural upper elementary school. The goal was to involve parents in the education of their children.

The writer used unique communication strategies to meet the needs of the culturally diverse population; established flexible hours for parent meetings in the home and at school; conducted monthly, evening parent education workshops based on parent needs; utilized classroom video productions to encourage parent attendance; and involved children in the process of parent participation.

The practicum goal was achieved. 31 out of 31 parents attended the parent-teacher conference; an average of 24 out of 31 parents attended the evening workshops; and 20 out of 31 parents used home learning activities.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The writer's work setting consists of a K-12 combination secondary and elementary school located in a very culturally diverse, rural, lower economic community. Children attending this school come from Philippine, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Hawaiian, Spanish, Caucasian, Negro, Southeast Asian, Samoan and other Pacific island families. There are many mixed marriages in this community of broken homes. Only one out of four in the writer's class of 31 children is living with their natural parents. Some of the parents, living in separate houses, periodically exchange their children for a week or two at a time.

The school is located in a rural setting, close to a small village of less than one thousand people. The school and village are surrounded by fruit, flower and nut farms, where many of the local inhabitants are employed. Some of the parents work in public service positions and a few commute to the nearest city, about 20 miles away where most of the state and county jobs can be found and where a

university is located. Most of the families are in the lower socioeconomic strata and many families receive federal and state economic assistance.

One thousand, seven hundred and fifty students attend the school and the student population is increasing due to the fact that local land is plentiful and still inexpensive. The population is increasing so rapidly that there are not enough rooms available for all the resource personnel. Some of the Chapter One teachers, for example, are forced to conduct their lessons in the halls. Small storage rooms, closets and teachers' lounges are also used as classrooms and offices by other resource personnel. A new elementary school is on the drawing board but will not be ready until September, 1991.

The upper elementary school consists of five fourth and five fifth grade classes. The school is a K-12 facility in name only. A street divides the school where the K-5 classes attend on one side and the 6-12 classes attend on the other. A vice-principal is basically in charge of the K-5 program and the principal and two vice-principals administer to the affairs of the 6-12 program.

Writer's Role

Many of the 31 students enrolled in the writer's fourth grade self-contained class have never travelled beyond a two hundred mile radius. The writer's role in this setting is to teach all elementary school subjects as mandated in the

state guide to all the children in class, and to establish a line of communication between the class and the home. The responsibilities as a classroom teacher are demanding and generally draw heavily from the writer's twenty-five years experience as an educator.

The writer has taught grades three through twelve in five public schools and is an ANISA (American National Institute for Social Advancement) master teacher. He has presented many learning disability workshops and seminars to administrators, teachers, medical doctors and parents. In addition to opening a private learning disabilities center and hosting a national radio program in another country, the writer's learning disability center established in this country was selected last year by the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as one of five exemplary programs designed to improve learning.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Poor parent participation has been a problem at this school for many years. Teachers have complained that parents were not interested in the education of their children as evidenced by poor attendance at school parent-teachers' meetings; poor attendance at parent-teacher conferences; poor attendance at open houses; and general disinterest in helping the children with school related tasks at home.

Parents have complained about poor school-home communication and disinterested teachers as evidenced by the few notices sent home and the open house invitations being extended to high school parents only. Regardless of where the finger of blame had been pointed, the persons affected the most in this situation were the children. Many of these children came to school unprepared relative to study skills, self-confidence, self-esteem, goal setting and volition so necessary for academic success. Also, many of these children have not had rich life experiences and

activities which enhance their chances for school success.

The problem of poor parent participation in school related activities had not been solved because of the well intentioned but ineffective solutions applied in the past. Calling for open houses, sending letters home, inviting parents in for conferences and even utilizing parent volunteers in the classroom had not provided the basis for a solution to this problem at this school.

The problem, as it applied to the writer is that there weren't enough parents attending fourth grade parent-teacher conferences, visiting the classroom, or actively involved at home in the education of their children.

Problem Documentation

This year the problem was highlighted at the first general parent-teachers' association meeting held at the beginning of the school year where about one hundred adults out of a possible 1,500 to 1,800 attended the meeting (the school's household mailing list included 1,100 families). Many of the attendees (30 - 40) were teachers.

As shown in Table 1, at least 25% of the parents in last year's fourth grade classes did not confer with the classroom teachers, visit their child's school, or become actively involved at home in the education of their children (see Appendix A for questionnaire).

Table 1

Opinions of Three Fourth Grade Returning Teachers

Teacher	A	B	C
How many students were enrolled in your class?	29	29	29
Approximately how many of the parents attended the parent-teacher conferences?	Three out of four	Three out of four	Three out of four
Were the children's parents invited to visit the class while in session?	Yes	Yes	No
Approximately how many of the parents visited the class while in session?	1	2	0
Approximately how many of the parents were actively involved at home in the education of their children?	One out of three	One out of four	One out of four

The writer interviewed the vice-principal, in charge of the elementary school, and the Early Education Project Coordinator for this school. Both administrators strongly agreed that parent participation was a definite problem and that the children were handicapped because of it.

Causative Analysis

There were numerous probable causes of the problem.

Many of the parents, being poorly educated, might have felt ashamed of their own educational inadequacies and might have tended to avoid any invitation to become involved in their children's education. The community has a large mobile population which includes immigrants and refugees who are new to the area and to the culture. It is probable that lacking the traditional support systems, some of these families might have felt somewhat lost in the crowd.

Many of the parents spend long hours working during the day and could have found it difficult to attend any parent-teacher conferences or accept any invitations to visit their child's class during the day. Also, family life has changed dramatically the past two decades, with more mothers employed, more parents divorced, and many remarried with step-families. With the added pressure of a single parent earning the necessary income, it is probable that the working hours could have conflicted with the school schedule.

Another probable cause is that some teachers might not have been communicating well with all the families. All of the families might not have been receiving the written communication that was being sent home with their children. All the teachers might not have been making every effort to contact each family and some teachers might not have understood the various cultures and how best to communicate with each culture.

Some teachers might not have been educating the parents to educate the children at home. Parents might not have known how to help educate their children at home. Some teachers might not have known what kind of care each child received after school and it is probable that many children in the writer's class were on their own after school, until one or both of the parents returned from work.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Other professionals have a great deal to say about poor parent participation in school related activities. Bradley (1988) cites evidence that suggests parent involvement in education is essential for success in the school and that too few American parents are involved in their children's education. McLaughlin and Shields (1987) believe that home-based parent partnership programs should be a policy priority.

Vukelich and Naeny (1980) report that parents should be asked to be partners in teaching beginning reading. They offer suggestions to enlist the aid of parents in a home-school reading program.

Bruce (1989) states that most European countries value parent participation. Countries such as Holland, Britain, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, and France are taking active steps to include parents in the education of children.

Henderson (1988) refers to 35 studies on the subject of parent involvement and student achievement published by the

National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCE) in 1981. The findings of all the studies demonstrated that parent involvement in almost any form produced measurable gains in student achievement. In 1987, the NCCE completed an update. This time the NCCE found 18 new studies showing that programs designed with a strong component of parent involvement produced students who performed better than those who had taken part in otherwise identical programs with less parent involvement. In other words, the research places the conclusion well beyond dispute.

Berliner (1985) cites a study showing the family having the most influence on the school achievement of children. Henderson (1988) reminds educators that when parents show an interest in their children's education and maintain high expectations for their performance, they are promoting attitudes that are critical to achievement. Nelson (1985) stresses the importance of parental attitudes, involvement, and service.

According to researcher Walberg (1984) extensive evidence suggests that family participation in fostering learning has declined for several decades. Zager (1989) states that research shows that the parent-child relationship is the critical factor in a child's school success, especially during the early years. He feels that the child is greatly influenced by the parents' belief in the value of education, their interest in school progress,

and their encouragement of reading and other skills development at home.

Glendinning (1988) cites a 1987 Metropolitan Life Survey of American Teachers which revealed that most parents (55% of all parents) felt that schools only contact parents when there is a problem with their child. Johnston and Slotnik (1985) suggest that there is more parental pressure for significant involvement of late, but school administrators and teachers often respond with skepticism and sometimes hostility. Barron and Colvin (1984) submit, for example, that a conference skills deficit on the part of the teachers has led this group to view parent-teacher conferences as something very unpleasant which prevents them from enjoying their week. McDaniel (1982) submits that there is an occasional tendency for teachers to preach or pass judgment on parents during parent-teacher conferences. Wolf and Stephens (1989) argue that teachers and administrators are not spending enough time conferencing parents of children who need the most help.

Henderson (1988) discusses positive change in the direction of including parents in the educational process such as the National Education Association's recent effort to train teachers to work more closely with parents, however, it is still not unusual to hear educators claim that classroom learning is best left to the professionals. Many teachers argue that parents disrupt the learning

environment and that involving parents is a time consuming extravagance. On the other hand, Dean (1989) reports that parents often perceive principals or teachers as impulsively denying them access to something they want (such as cumulative record information or choosing their child's teacher. Dean also makes the point that schools expend great effort to maintain the status quo and that policies regulating parent involvement are especially vulnerable to such effort.

Bradley (1988) cites a recent study that found that parents employed outside the home spent, on the average, eight minutes a day with their children on learning-related activities. Seefeldt (1985) feels that overworked, time-short parents are asked to participate in too many trivial school functions (baking cupcakes and attending school plays).

The causes of the problem are varied. McLaughlin and Shields (1987) suggest that most schools do not implement appropriate strategies to involve low-income parents. There are other researchers who believe that schools are not doing their homework. Cassanova (1985) submits that parents do want to help but don't know how. It is extremely difficult for parents to participate if they are not educated. Along these same lines, Rothenberg (1983) has found that training in group leadership techniques that encourage parent involvement is uncommon.

Haley and Berry (1988) suggest culturally diverse schools pose difficulties, especially when the school does not understand the problem of cultural distance. Swick (1986) contends that one of the problems is that many parents are not aware of their influence on children's cultural development and that one of the common cross cultural goals (which is to help children succeed), is not taking place as it should in the home.

Epstein (1988) reports that the changing families; non-English speaking homes, single parent homes, mothers working outside the home, etc., all impact on the problem. The structure of the American family has changed considerably and the schools have not kept pace. Lewis (1989) punctuates this thought by emphasizing the stress placed on family members who are separated due to high pressure hobs, fast-track careers, long working days, and lengthy commutes. These stresses on parents do affect children who are expected to be independent high achievers early on. Epstein (1988) feels that new policies and procedures to accommodate the ever changing needs of the parents must be implemented.

Brandt (1989) in his interview with Epstein, disclosed another interesting aspect of the problem. Educators do have choices relative to desired goals and should therefore know what choices exist and the likely consequences of these alternatives. For example, Epstein discusses five types of parent involvement (parenting, communicating, volunteering,

learning at home, and representing other parents) and how each practice is linked to a different outcome. One of the problems confronting educators is that traditional approaches can no longer be considered the best way to achieve the results they are supposed to produce. Involving parents in the PTA does not necessarily involve them in helping their children at home.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was that the parents become more involved in their children's education.

Behavioral Objectives and Measurements

This practicum addressed five specific objectives and verification procedures. They were as follows:

1. During the course of this practicum, 30 out of 31 parents will participate in all parent-teacher conferences and shall be verified by parent signatures (see Appendix B).
2. During the course of this practicum, at least 15 out of 31 parents will visit the class while in session. This objective shall be verified by parent signatures (see Appendix C).
3. During the course of this practicum, at least 23 out of 31 parents will be actively involved in the education of their children at home. This objective shall be verified by the number of parents using at least two different activities each week in the series of home learning

activities which require parent and child participation (see Appendix D).

4. During the course of this practicum, at least 15 out of 31 parents shall participate in at least one classroom activity serving as a game monitor, a video recording monitor, a curriculum tutor, a speaker, an excursion aide or a computer assistant. This objective shall be verified by parent signature (see Appendix E).
5. During the course of this practicum, at least 23 out of 31 parents shall participate in monthly parent education classes utilizing professional resource personnel. This objective shall be verified by parent signature (see Appendix F).

All behavioral objectives were easily evaluated by using a parent signature instrument with the exception of behavioral objective number three. It was necessary to design a parent-home questionnaire to determine the type of home learning activity and frequency used.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem of poor parent participation in school related activities was most certainly not new and neither were many of the solutions that have already been applied. Schools have sent newsletters home to parents; looked for ways to build stronger PTA's and PTO's, scheduled open houses once, twice, and three times a year, and set up parent advisory councils. This proposal was unique because it was the first time that respect for various cultural groups was addressed, parent quality time was recognized, frequent personal home-school communication was employed (including release time from school to visit parents in the home), parent education workshops utilizing local university staff were offered (child-care and transportation provided), student video presentations were used during the evening meetings, and children were educated relative to the importance of parent participation.

Haley and Berry (1988) suggested surveying community attitudes and interests and identifying new ways parents could be involved. This approach might be effective in

communities where a reasonable return of questionnaires could be expected and if the results of the survey would be representative of the community population in terms of its culture and values. The writer's community was so culturally diverse and the level of parent participation was so low that a representative and fair survey would be very difficult to obtain.

Epstein (1988) noted that parents at all grade levels need clear information on all aspects of education in the classroom and that the teacher should focus on getting parents to help their children with school-work at home. It is quite probable that involving parents in learning activities at home by providing parents with information on school programs, course objectives, and guidance on how to help at home on school work would be beneficial. It is important to consider materials for parents who are poorly educated. It is likely that parents want to help their children succeed but do not know how or where to begin.

In her interview with Brandt (1989) Epstein encouraged weekend assignments instead of focusing on weekdays. The homework should be designed to involve parents when they would have more time to discuss ideas with their children. Considering the number of working parents in the community who wish to help their children, special weekend assignments offered a viable alternative.

Folkins (1988) offered home remedies for parents who

wish to help their children. She encouraged the use of personal notebooks for children to write all homework assignments and test dates. She used games to teach multiplication tables such as parking two blocks away from a favorite beach and taking a step closer to the beach for every correct multiplication answer and taking a step back for every incorrect answer. For reading Folkins suggested using reading material that children enjoy. It could mean reading jokes and riddles, where the child might find it enjoyable reading the punchlines. Reading might also involve an adult reading all but the last two words of a line, the last two words reserved for the child.

Stewart (1989) suggested that parents need a reminder concerning basic homework skills. She mentioned the importance of a place to study free of distractions, especially television. Scheduling time for homework is different for each child. Some children like to get it out of the way while others need a break after a full day of school. Stewart also reminded parents to get all the tools on the teacher's list in the fall, communicate with the child's teacher often and not to do the projects for the children. The use of personal notebooks, math games, and reading lures all have merit and the personal reminders for parents might help to stay on task. Most of these ideas could be included on the parent evening meeting agenda.

Davis (1989) used weekly student awards assemblies to

involve parents by presenting a ribbon to a "Student of the Week" and to a "Super Reader of the Week." Reason slips are filled out by the teacher for the two recipients (one from each class). e reason slips are shared with the parents by telephone in their native language before the awards assembly. During the course of the conversation the parent is told how proud the teacher and the administration is of their child's effort. Other information is exchanged during the conversation relative to other school matters. Davis also sends thank-you notes and letters of praise to parents (in their native language) and students often to encourage and strengthen parent participation. Both ideas are stimulating and both ideas would provide exciting opportunities for parents to participate and feel good about it.

Henniger (1982) and many other researchers advocate the use of the telephone for initial contact early in the school year, for continued occasional talks reporting progress and good news, and for early notification of problems. Henniger encouraged the use of the telephone as an alternative to parent-teacher conferences due to the time saved and the ease of communication. Telephones can be used as a powerful tool in increasing parent participation but face to face contact in the writer's class is essential for optimal communication to take place.

Rauschenberg and Binegar (1988) called for special

parent education meetings and promoting the family connection. Calling special parent education meetings in the evening when more parents are able to attend would be helpful. Also, several professional resource people from the local university would be available to make presentations at the parent education meetings as a public service. In addition, promoting the family connection might have a positive affect on the children coming from so many broken homes.

Johnston and Slotnik (1985) believed that involving parents in the decision-making process has merit. Many communities do benefit from community based decision-making; however there are several cultural groups represented who do not speak up at meetings nor are they interested in attending policy type gatherings. Also some parents are not only unable to read English-language materials, they are illiterate in their native language as well.

The Parents In Touch (PIT) program in Indianapolis, Indiana (referred to in a 1988 National School Board Association monograph) has been instrumental in revising parent-teacher conference times from 1:00 to 8:00 p.m. to accommodate the needs of working parents. The community needs a revision relative to parent-teacher conference times. Parents do have a difficult time attending after school meetings because of their heavy work loads and might welcome more flexible hours.

Seedfeldt (1985) encouraged educators to provide baby-sitting services and transportation when calling parent-teacher meetings. She also suggested preparing booklets on family resources for the parents, providing extended-day programs for the working parents, facilitating foster grandparent programs and that teachers actively question parents about their goals for their children and how the parents and the teacher can work together to meet the goals within the schools' curriculum. Many of Seedfeldt's ideas are worth trying and perhaps the writer could enlist the aid of adult volunteers to help with the transportation. It would not be difficult to provide baby-sitting services and a family resource booklet would be used. The district will be providing extended-day programs in February, 1990. Facilitating foster grandparent programs is not a high priority item due to time constraints but actively consulting parents about goals for their children could definitely fit into the program.

Hubert (1989) recommended inviting students to the parent-teacher conference. Teachers and parents attend inservice sessions prior to the conferences and then students are oriented. One of the advantages is that parents do not have to relay messages about teacher concerns and suggestions and parents gain valuable insights into the relationship between the teacher and their child. The writer has used this method in the past with positive

results. The key to this method lies in the training and orientation sessions.

Love (1989) reminded educators of the value in a home visit. She recommended at least one home visit before the school year begins and one during the year. Teachers can gain valuable insights which help in planning the curriculum. Besides knowing the child better and demonstrating a personal interest, parents are said to be more supportive of the school and participate in school activities. The writer feels that if the teacher is welcome (some are not for various reasons) the benefits far outweigh the considerable time required to visit each family.

Hunter (1989) suggested tapping into parents' competencies (hobbies, occupations, and cultures) and establishing training sessions in how to plan and conduct their presentations. She felt that training is important to establish ground rules, learn how to motivate, and how to deal with professional and possibly confidential information. Included in Hunter's article are sample letters to parents and a sample format for a parent presentation. Inviting parents into the class to present various content lessons can enrich the curriculum. The training sessions are valuable, especially if time allows for a full two-hour inservice session as Hunter suggested.

Description of Selected Solution

The writer used many of the solutions as suggested above. Among the selected solutions were:

1. Survey parent needs during parent-teacher meetings.
2. Encourage the parents to help their children at home.
3. Encourage weekend assignments to allow for quality parent-child activity time.
4. Use home learning activities that require parent and child participation.
5. Recognize children's accomplishments in the class and inform the parents by telephone.
6. Call parents frequently with positive communication.
7. Arrange for special parent education meetings in the evening.
8. Offer transportation and child care services during evening meetings.
9. Make home visits.
10. Invite the children to attend parent-teacher conferences.
11. Invite parents into the class to share personal experiences, hobbies, etc.

Report of Action Taken

Before parent-teacher conference time, notices were sent home requesting each parent to choose a day and time within the conference week for a meeting. The notice also requested the presence of the child. A second notice was sent confirming the appointment and a follow up telephone call was made to each parent the night before the conference

was to be held. In addition, each child wrote a personal letter to their parents requesting their presence.

During the parent-teacher-student conference, basic homework skills were reviewed and the purchase of personal notebooks for each student was requested for daily homework entries. Five parents didn't attend for various personal reasons and were rescheduled. Three conferences were held at a later date late in the school day, one was held at a place of business in another community, and one was held in the home.

Based on the parents' request during parent-teacher-student conference time for a workshop on how to motivate children, the writer contacted the local university. The chair of the Department of Psychology enthusiastically agreed to conduct the second in a series of evening meetings.

Due to the fact that many of the parents in the writer's class worked during the school day, the first meeting was scheduled in the evening. Personal invitations were offered in the form of; letters mailed to each home (followed up later with another letter sent home with each student), a telephone call to each family from the writer, and a personal telephone call to the Hawaiian and Philippine families using key, local people. The key people (well known local people and Chapter One volunteer parents from the writer's class) knew the parents and knew how to speak

their native language. It was felt that speaking to and inviting parents in their primary language would bridge some of the culture gap.

Home visits were planned but not implemented at this stage. The key people did not have the time and the writer was refused on several occasions.

Permission was secured from the vice-principal for using the classroom at night and arrangements were made with the head custodian to turn the outdoor lights on for safe deportment.

A brief video program involving each child in various aspects of the instructional program had been created by the writer and was shown at the first evening meeting. The agenda for the evening was as follows:

1. Brief introduction of attending parents and the writer.
2. Introduce class video program and present.
3. Discuss any aspect of the video after presentation.
4. Present and discuss the daily class program. Invite comments and discuss any aspect of concern relative to curriculum, homework and/or the class schedule.
5. Consult about the idea of holding parent workshops in the future and the frequency of the meetings.
6. Consult about topics of interest for future workshop planning.
7. Consult about problems parents might encounter during scheduled workshops (transportation and child-care needs).

8. Distribute the "Parents for Kids Survey" (see Appendix G) and share the need for parents to contribute their talents and knowledge. Collect the forms the following day from the children, thus allowing enough time to read and complete appropriate items.

9. Distribute the series of parent-child home learning activities (see Appendix H) and discuss.

10. Close the meeting with an expression of gratitude for the parents giving their time, take a group photograph for all the children to see the following day, and share the food which will be provided by attending parents (it is customary in this community).

The writer reviewed the completed "Parents for Kids Survey" forms. Only two parents had volunteered time to work in the classroom. It was hoped that enough parents would volunteer to be able to fill the following parent help categories:

1. Game monitor
2. Video recording monitor
3. Curriculum tutor
4. Speaker
5. Excursion aide
6. Computer assistant

The game monitor(s) would be responsible for supervising the language arts and math games played throughout the school day. The video recording monitor would be responsible for most of the video recording of selected school activities to be occasionally shared with parents during special parent meetings. The curriculum tutors would assist the writer in helping children complete assigned work in math, science, social studies, writing, and reading.

The speakers representing various cultural groups would share information and background about themselves. A native food evening was viewed as a culminating event in the writer's class or at the final parent workshop meeting. Other speakers would share information about their hobbies or occupations.

The excursion aides would assist in supervising the children on all excursions and the computer assistants would help tutor children in the basic use of the class computer. The computer assistants would also be asked to supervise computer activity during math, writing, and recess.

The two volunteer parent aides were assigned positions as curriculum tutors. Due to class size, the assistance was most needed in helping children complete their academic work.

To further strengthen the parent participation program, the writer selected a "Super Citizen of the Week" and a "Star Reader of the Week" every week and called the award winners' parents the evening before the presentation of certificates and shared the reasons why their child was selected.

In consultation at the first evening meeting, a group decision was made to have a parent education workshop once a month. The parents still wanted the meeting on child motivation.

All fourth and fifth grade parents and teachers (ten

classes) were invited to attend the second meeting. The writer used well known, key community people to help make telephone calls and extend personal invitations to the workshop. The writer solicited the aid of the recently hired Parent Community Network Center (PCNC) coordinator to co-sponsor the series of workshops, publicize, and help invite the parents and teachers. Letters were first sent to the teachers requesting their support in the form of attending the meeting and encouraging the children and their parents to attend. Letters were then sent to every fourth and fifth grade family announcing the event.

Anticipating a large parent turnout, the writer secured the use of the school's cafetorium. Refreshments, hosts to greet the parents, audio-visual requirements, child-care and transport services were coordinated by the writer and the PCNC director. The agenda was as follows:

1. Welcome the parents and the teachers. Introduce the PCNC coordinator.

2. Briefly discuss the importance of the meeting. Share information about just how important parents are to a healthy school program. Briefly share the goal of involving more parents in the education of their children.

3. Introduce the speaker and the topic.

4. Allow time for questions and answers.

5. After thanking the guest speaker, consult with the participants about future workshop topics.

6. Parents will be encouraged to sign the parent education roster (see Appendix F) and write comments.

7. Before thanking everyone, inform the parents and teachers that the next meeting will be held in the cafetorium with plenty of lead notice time.

8. Briefly discuss the Parent-Child Home Learning Activities (see Appendix H) and distribute.

Due to the poor turnout for the second evening meeting (two other teachers and families from the writer's class only), the third meeting was scheduled for the same class and classroom as the first evening meeting.

At this point in the practicum, about twenty children were bringing the weekly parent-child home learning activity forms back to school and several were falling behind in other homework assignments (involving parent and child cooperation such as composition). It was decided to cut down on some of the weekly assignments (when most of the parents were returning home from work and having to face too many other responsibilities) and assign the same work on weekends hoping for quality time.

Some of the children were commenting (during a period of consultation in class) that they enjoyed the first meeting but did not like being "baby sat" at the second. They also expressed an interest in being more involved at the meetings.

For the third evening meeting, each parent received two letters and a telephone call from the writer, personal contact from local key people and Chapter One tutors, and a personal letter, an invitation card, and a composition entitled, Why My Parents Should Bring Me To School On Monday

Evening from each child. The boys decided to wear ties (the writer had many expendable ties on hand) and the girls decided to wear their nice dresses. All children were encouraged to attend and share the class video and their writing with their families.

The agenda for the evening was as follows:

1. Welcome those in attendance, ask parents to sign the parent education roster, discuss the importance of the workshop and introduce the program for the evening.

2. Introduce the vice-principal and the two K.E.E.P. (Kamehameha Early Education Project) staff members presenting material on how to help children become better readers at home (involving parent participation).

3. After thanking the guest speakers, share important ways parents can become involved in the education of their children (use the overhead projector, give examples, and involve parents and children in the room).

4. Ask the children to share major accomplishments. Be generous with praise.

5. Briefly discuss the parent volunteer program and the need for parent help in the class.

6. Invite everyone to bring their refreshments close to the television for the class video program.

7. Close the meeting with an expression of gratitude for the parents giving their time, take a group photograph for all the children to see the following day, and share the leftover food which will be provided by K.E.E.P., the parents, and the writer.

After the workshop, the writer requested release time from school to visit the parents who had never attended an evening meeting. The request was granted by the K.E.E.P. staff coordinator (each participating teacher is entitled to

four "pull out" days per year). Two of the eight non-participating families agreed to meet, but not at home. The remaining six families were too busy. The day was used to meet three other families in their homes.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

This practicum addressed five specific behavioral objectives. As shown in Table 2, objectives two and four (involving parents in the classroom) were not even close to the desired outcome. Objective three (parent involvement in home learning activities) was very close to being fully realized. Objectives one, (parent conference attendance) and five (parent education attendance) were fully realized.

Table 2

Behavioral Objective Results

Objective	Achieved	Close	Not Achieved
#1 30 out of 31 parents will attend parent-teacher conferences.	31 parents attended		
#2 15 out of 31 parents will visit the class while in session.			4 parents visited
#3 23 out of 31 parents will be actively involved in the education of their children at home.		20 used home learning activities	
#4 15 out of 31 parents shall participate in at least one classroom activity.			2 parents participated
#5 23 out of 31 parents shall participate in monthly parent education classes.	23 parents (average for 3 meetings) participated		

An average of 23 parents participated in the monthly parent education classes as shown in Table 2, behavioral objective five. 22 out of 31 parents participated in the first parent education class. 21 out of 31 parents participated in the second class and 25 out of 31 participated in the third meeting. In addition, 14, 17, and

24 children, respectively, attended the three evening meetings.

Behavioral objectives one, two, four, and five were verified by parent signatures (see Appendices B, C, E, and F respectively). Behavioral objective three was verified by the number of parents using at least two different activities each week in the series of home learning activities which required parent and child participation (see Appendix D).

Conclusions

In addition to traditional communication (telephone calls to each family by the writer) non-traditional communication was used for fulfilling objective one (strong parent-teacher conference attendance). Such a culturally diverse community required that parents be invited in their primary language (by using key people) and it helped to use the key people to act as mutual friends and "go betweens" in the beginning stages to build the trust and confidence needed to make parental involvement a reality.

Inviting the children to attend the conferences and help encourage their families (with personal letters) to attend helped bring more parents to school. The meetings should be more appropriately called parent-teacher-student conferences.

Finally, determination and resolve to include all

families in the conference process was needed. More telephone calls were required to establish days, times, and venues more appropriate to the needs of the five parents who couldn't attend the first meeting. More flexible hours were required for three families (meetings held late in the day) and two families required meetings held away from school (one at a car rental agency in another town and another in the home).

Objectives two and four were not achieved and remained real mysteries (in contrast to the other objectives) until the writer researched the office files and discovered the fact that most of the parents worked during the day. Only 6 out of 31 parents could give any time to visit the class while in session (objective two) or participate in classroom activities (objective four) during the school day. 4 out of 6 parents visited the class while in session and 2 out of 6 parents participated in classroom activities. Teaching in a community of working families requires other kinds of parent participation activities.

Eventhough objective three was not fully realized (20 out of 31 parents were actively involved in the education of their children at home), most of the parents attending the evening meetings were helping their children. The downside of these statistics is that eleven families were not helping their children at home. The writer decided to investigate this issue and placed telephone calls to each of the eleven

families to determine the cause. Most of the reasons again focused on the long work day. Many of the parents did not have the energy or the time to work with their children during the work week. They not only faced long work days but had to return home and face different but demanding tasks such as meal preparation, clean-up, laundry, home repairs, getting the children to bed, etc. Any plan involving parent participation at home must consider the work schedule and demands placed on the parents during the week. Quality time on the weekend could be the viable alternative (the writer has subsequently and very successfully used composition work as the vehicle in parental involvement on weekends).

Objective five was realized (in the writer's fourth grade class) after implementing all the strategies for parent participation. The poor turnout for the second evening meeting was unexpected (only 3 out of 10 teachers and only one parent from the other nine invited classes supported the meeting). The sole parent attended because she was the Parent Teacher Student Association President serving in an official capacity. All other attending parents were from the writer's class.

Many of the teachers invited to participate could not have realized the importance of parent participation and what it means to children in the classroom by simply reading a few invitations and listening to a few pleas. Inservice

training supported by the administrative staff would have been beneficial. Teacher and administrator education is crucial to a successful parent participation program. Teachers and administrators must see the need for such a plan to exist, consult about the most effective plan to implement at each school site, and act.

Finally, the key factor in getting the parents to participate was consulting with and involving the children. Once that was in place, the numbers dramatically increased. The number of children increased (14, 17, and 24) at each meeting and there was standing room only (53 people - 29 adults and 24 children) attending the third meeting. The children eventually verbalized their need to be a part of the evening program and in the long run, were responsible for bringing their parents to the meetings. Yes, it was fun for the children to dress up and show off a bit on video and share their work and it was fun for the parents to come together and celebrate the stars of the evening; the children.

Recommendations

1. Consult with and involve students when inviting parents to meetings at school.

2. Survey the needs of the parents for future meetings during the first meeting (this could be the first parent-teacher conference when parents feel less threatened by smaller numbers). Discuss their needs in open and frank consultation during the first meeting.

3. Schedule meetings (based on parent and child needs) when parents and children can attend, even if the time

or day conflicts with the school day.

4. Invite the children to all meetings, including parent-teacher conferences.

5. Involve the children in every meeting. For part of the meeting, children can share their own writing or art work, tell about the daily class program, sing a few songs, or be the stars of a class video production depicting daily class events.

6. Parents who speak English as a second language should be invited in their primary language.

7. If possible, involve local people working in the school such as custodians, cafeteria workers, secretaries, bus drivers, parent aides, and tutors to help invite parents to meetings.

8. Communicate frequently by telephone to all the parents. Call at least once a month, even if it is just to say hello or find out how the child is doing at home. Try to keep all conversation brief and positive.

9. Select a "Star Reader of the Week" and a "Super Citizen of the Week" and call each family before the awards are given to tell why their child was selected.

10. Use local resources for speakers such as a university (when appropriate) for meetings. Many universities require their instructors to participate in community service projects.

11. Provide child care and transportation when needed for meetings.

12. Provide home learning activities which require parent and child participation. Ask teachers and other resource personnel for interesting and fun activities to add to the list.

13. If the parents are working during the week, try to help establish quality time during the weekends when parents and their children can work with home learning activities.

14. Involve the children and the parents in reporting on a weekly basis at least two or more home learning activities used during the week.

The writer plans to continue with the monthly evening

meetings and will place a great deal more emphasis on involving the children. Thanks to the children, parents are learning how to have fun at the evening workshops and children seem to have an endless reservoir of ideas about how to have a good time.

Dissemination

The practicum will be disseminated to key people (including the director) in the Center for Development of Early Education in Honolulu which sponsors the Kamehameha Early Education Project throughout the state of Hawaii. Realizing the importance of parent participation in their own program, they have expressed a keen interest in the practicum. CDEE has provided the writer release time from school duties to visit parents in the home, educational materials for children attending the second evening meeting, suggestions for home learning activities, and a presentation at the third evening meeting by the local project coordinator and a grade level consultant about shared reading in the home.

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APPENDIX A

PARENT-SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE

August 28, 1989

Fellow Fourth Grade Teachers,

The following questionnaire is designed to provide me with needed information relative to my fourth grade assignment next year. Please take a few minutes and respond to the following items:

1. Were you teaching the fourth grade at this school last year?

   _____

2. How many students were enrolled in your class?

   _____

3. Were the children's parents invited to participate in parent-teacher conferences?

   _____

4. How many conferences?

   _____

5. Approximately what percentage of the parents attended the parent-teacher conferences?

   _____

Thank you for helping!

APPENDIX B

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE ROSTER

Name	Date	Comments

APPENDIX C

PARENT-CLASSROOM VISITATION ROSTER

Name	Date	Comments

APPENDIX D

PARENT-HOME PARTICIPATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Parent _____

Name of Child _____

Please answer the following questions.

1. Did you use the series of home learning activities with your child?

   _____ Yes _____ No

2. If Yes, were the activities useful? How?

3. Did you and your child use at least two different activities each week?

   _____ Yes _____ No

4. Please record the activity numbers for each week.

   Week 1 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 2 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 3 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 4 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 5 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 6 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 7 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 8 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 9 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 10 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 11 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

   Week 12 We used activity numbers ____ and ____.

5. Did you and your child enjoy using the activities?

APPENDIX E

PARENT-CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION ROSTER

Name	Date	Activity	Comments

APPENDIX F

PARENT EDUCATION ATTENDANCE ROSTER

Name	Date	Comments

APPENDIX G

PARENTS FOR KIDS SURVEY

If you would like to be a Parent for Kids volunteer in Room A-201, please complete the following:

Special Talents/Skills

Please describe any talent and or skills that you would enjoy sharing. For example, are you a musician, an artist or a composer? Can you sing or dance or share a story? Can you sculpt or carve wood? Can you share a game or a recipe? Can you build a house or assemble a car? Do you raise flowers or create handicraft?

Special Knowledge/Travel

What do you know that you can share with our children? Have you lived in other cultures? What experiences can you share which you feel would enhance and enrich other people's lives?

Curriculum Tutor

Have you been a parent volunteer? What were your responsibilities? What would you enjoy most? For example, would you rather tutor in math, science, social studies, writing or reading? How much time can you share?

Additional Information

Please add anything you can share that has not been mentioned.

Thank you for attending tonight!

_____
Parent Volunteer

_____
Telephone Number

APPENDIX H

PARENT-CHILD HOME LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Dear Parents,

The following list of activities are designed to involve you and your child in enjoyable learning activities in the home. A few of the activities are adapted from the ideas suggested by Evelyn Spache in her book, Reading Activities for Child Involvement. Most of the activities are those suggested by the Kamehameha Early Education Project coordinator and her project teachers at your school and by teachers in the upper elementary. Math, reading, music, social studies, geography, science, and writing are all represented. Memory activities are also included. Try as many as you like and remember, the important thing is to participate with your child while having fun!

1. The old "I spy" game that has been played for generations still has appeal for children and adults. Each person takes a turn spying an object that begins with a particular sound. He says, "I spy something that begins like cheese." The player who names the correct object then gets to be the spy. The game can become increasingly more difficult by encouraging the players to use descriptive language.

2. Pretend you are planning a meal. To start, each person names something to eat that begins with the letter a. When a player cannot think of a food, they must go on to name one starting with the next letter in the alphabet, and the other players follow their lead.

3. 110 is very popular. Each player receives two cards. All face cards are worth 10 points and the ace is worth 1 point. All other cards are worth their face value. The first two cards have to be multiplied. If, for example, you have a five and an eight, the total value would be (5X8=40) forty. The next card drawn is added. If the next card happened to be a king, 10 points would be added to the forty (40+10=50). The next card drawn would be the multiplier. If the card happened to be a 2, then the total score would be 100. (50x2=100) The next card drawn would be added. The pattern is multiplication, addition, multiplication and addition. The object of the game is to see who can come the closest to 110 without going over the top.

4. If you enjoy music choose a favorite melody and rewrite the words to the song with your child. This can also be done with familiar poetry.

5. Each evening at dinner have everyone choose a headline

or story from the news or newspaper. Each person can discuss their story for three minutes. Everyone shares and discusses the issues related to the story. Try to encourage finding a variety of articles, some serious, some funny etc.

6. Tell a story with your child. Each person takes turns telling one line of the story. The first line must start with a word that begins with a. The next line must begin with a word that begins with b, then c, d, etc. See if you can get all the way to the end of the alphabet and keep the story going.

7. From a magazine or newspaper cut out pictures of people who are involved in various activities. Cartoons without the captions are good to use. Paste these on plain white paper. Draw conversation bubbles above the pictures. You and your child can then write in your own cartoons or what you think the people might be thinking or saying.

8. In a shoe box, place a few objects such as a pencil, a coin, a toothbrush, a photograph, a spoon etc. Allow your child to look at the objects for ten seconds and then turn away while you remove one of the objects. S/he will have to name the missing object. Of course, parents should have their turns too!

9. Write words that could be part of compound words on one hundred or more small blank cards. Each player is dealt eight cards. The remaining cards are placed in a stack in the center of the table. The first player places one card from his hand to make a compound. If he cannot, he draws a card from the stack and the play continues with the next player. The first player to use all his cards wins.

10. Reading assistance ideas:
    * Paired reading - alternate paragraphs while reading aloud.
    * Reread the story using opposite paragraphs.
    * Read dialogue only.
    * Read books while listening to cassettes of the same book.
    * Parent reads all but the last two words in each sentence. Child reads the last two words. Reverse roles after a few sentences or paragraphs.
    * Parent reads everything but the punch-line in a joke or riddle. Child reads the punch-line.

11. TIC-TAC-TOE - Materials: paper, pencil & storybook. Draw a tic-tac-toe square. Parent and child take

turns pointing to words in the storybook they know while saying the word aloud. If word is said correctly an 'x" or "o" is placed on the square. The person who completes three of their marks in a row is the winner. Variation: Person selects word for the other player to say (More difficult). Words are selected and the meaning of the word is described according to how it is used in the story.
Turns taken to point to words with different endings such as: "ed," "ing," "ly," "er," etc. and say words correctly.

12. Parent and child go on a coupon search in the local papers. The child is to help find the items in the store and calculate the savings on each item.

13. Use a state map. Discuss some different feature of your state every evening with your child.

14. Make a family birthday graph with your child. On a large paper draw a grid. Label the graph along one edge with the twelve months, along the other edge with numerals. Have each child color in the square for the month in which they were born. Repeat for each month.

15. Have your child make a detailed map of the route from his house to the house of a special friend. Include features such as streets, parks, homes, and buildings. Ask the child to tell things he would see on the way to the friend's house. Call attention to safe routes to follow. The amount of detail should vary according to the age of the child.

16. Draw a map with your child of the neighborhood, community or school. Discuss scale and symbols. Practice locating streets, buildings, parks and distances from one location to another.

17. Using the World Almanac have each player choose a state. Then each player gets three minutes to list as many facts as he can about that state. The player with the most facts wins.

18. Each player develops a set of clues about some geographical feature. Then each player presents their clues. The person who guesses the correct answer first gets one point. The player with the most points at the end wins.

19. Put a large U.S. map on the floor. Toss a marker, such as a bean bag, onto the map. Wherever it lands the player must give the abbreviation for the state. You

can vary this using different information such as capitols, cities, state birds etc.

20. Use a local city map to work on abbreviations. You and your child can read the street lists together. You can see who can find the most abbreviations.

21. Tropical storms reported on the news can be used by procuring a hurricane map and tracking weather reports and the storm with your child This gives excellent practice in using latitude and longitude, in listening, and in following directions.

22. Using a box with a lid, start a "mad" box. Children can write any feelings they may have about brothers, sister, friends, parents, school, or other topics and put them in the "mad box." They must not use names or four letter slang. This often supplies children with a healthy outlet for their emotions. Encourage the use of descriptive adjectives by explaining how they describe feelings with more impact. You could use a thesaurus to find adjectives to help your child express themselves.

23. Discuss intangible terms with your child. You can start by describing what they mean to you and then have your child describe their meanings. Some examples are:

Happiness is _____	Hungry is _____
Love is _____	Tired is _____
Misery is _____	Confusion is ____

24. Involve math, social studies, or science along with a sense of fun in learning to use the dictionary.
    Examples:
    A. Find the combined lengths of a vole, a walrus, and a newborn alligator.
    B. Which is largest: a cricket, centipede, or inch-worm?
    C. Which would you enjoy for dessert: truffle, stroganoff, or mush?
    D. If you were going fishing, would you take: a soffet, a velocipede or a leader?

25. Have a "legal negative party." For about fifteen minutes, ask each other questions using not, for which the answers must be given in contracted form. Example:
    Q. "Who will not eat ice cream?"
    A. "I won't eat ice cream."
    Ideas for contractions:

will not	would not	could not
is not	had not	were not
should not	have not	has not

can not was not does not
did not

26. You say a word with a prefix or suffix and your child must respond with the root word. Finding unusual words in the dictionary to use can also work on vocabulary. Give your child the definition for the word and see if they can use it in a sentence.

27. Work with various recipes in the kitchen. Try doubling a recipe.

28. Write a letter to a friend, leaving out all punctuation. Have your child fill in the correct punctuation.

29. Ask your child to choose a game, then play it with him/her.

30. After reading a short story to your child, ask him/her to describe the main character.

31. Have your child combine the two sentences below to make one sentence.
    An old pot was thrown out.
    The old toy was thrown out.

32. Have your child use food advertisements. to find out how much a children's party at home would cost.

33. Whenever a library book is overdue, have your child figure out the fine.

34. Using a TV Guide, have your child classify programs as fiction or non-fiction.

35. Have your child write a thank-you note to someone who was nice to him/her this week.

36. Ask your child to take an imaginary vacation on the moon. Ask: "What should you take with you?"

37. Using a local or "Neighbors" section of the newspaper, ask your child to choose and read an article and then tell about the main idea of that article.

38. Have your child read a newspaper story. Ask him/her: "What happened? Where did it happen? When did it happen?"

39. Ask your child to arrange the following words in alphabetical order.

amount
amaze
amuse
amber
among

40. Have your child subtract his/her birth year from 2,000 to find out how old he/she will be at the turn of the century.

41. While grocery shopping, have your child figure out how much more one can of food costs than another.

42. Select 10 pairs of cards and deal in two rows face down. The first player turns two cards over and if they match, another turn is awarded. If the cards do not match they are turned face down again. The next player repeats the process but will have the added advantage of remembering where the original two cards were placed. The object is to remember as many cards as possible to help match as many pairs as possible.

43. Read all but the last two words of a line, the last two words are reserved for your child.

44. Read all but the punchline of a joke or riddle to your child. Save the best part for your youngster!

45. Park two blocks away from your favorite beach and take a step closer to the beach for every correct multiplication answer and take a step back for every incorrect answer.